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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002008

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM PLC MEMBER CALLS FOR MORE NUANCE IN
APPROACH TOWARD HAMAS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a May 15 meeting with the Consul General, Fatah Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Bernard Sabella called for more nuance in the international community's approach toward the new Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA). Sabella agreed that pressure should be placed on Hamas to accept prior agreements, but pointed out that the current international approach toward the PA government has caused serious harm to Palestinians. Sabella warned that further deterioration in the economic situation coupled with Israeli PM Olmert's stated intention to proceed with unilateral measures in the West Bank would further undermine the USG's standing with Palestinians and the Arab world. End summary.

¶2. (C) In an introductory May 15 meeting with the Consul General, PLC member Bernard Sabella outlined his efforts to use his position as a legislator to advocate for his constituency in his Jerusalem district. Sabella said that his main concern centered on the difficult conditions facing Palestinians stemming from the construction of the separation barrier and "draconian" Israeli measures toward Palestinians inside Jerusalem. He cited as an example the challenges faced by his constituents in the village of Bir Nabala, north of Jerusalem, whose residents have been "cut off" from Jerusalem as a result of the barrier.

Sabella: More 'Balance' Needed
From International Community

¶3. (C) Sabella said that Palestinians did not consider the USG an impartial player in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, a perception reinforced by Israeli PM Olmert's stated plans to proceed with unilateral measures in the West Bank. Palestinians would view any Israeli unilateral moves as having the agreement of the USG. The Consul General responded that the GOI may be more open to talking with the Palestinians than previously, and cautioned against interpreting Olmert's upcoming visit to Washington as outright support for the Prime Minister's plan.

¶4. (C) Sabella indicated that Hamas' inability to pay salaries had placed considerable pressure on Palestinian families, adding that ordinary things such as a parent giving pocket money to children had become financially difficult. In the midst of this crisis, Hamas has sought to blame the economic hardships on USG and Israeli policies. While Sabella agreed that Hamas must abide by previous political agreements, international pressure had to be measured to avoid punishing Palestinians. He feared that the deteriorating economic situation would only alienate

Palestinians further from the U.S. The Consul General responded that the international community sought to pressure Hamas in a way that did not punish Palestinians. In this regard, discussions with the EU were ongoing to find a mechanism to channel assistance to Palestinians while maintaining pressure on the Hamas-led PA. Sabella agreed Hamas had to accept responsibility for the welfare of all Palestinians.

Palestinian Christians

15. (C) Sabella, a practicing Roman Catholic who has written extensively on the Palestinian Christian community, said that greater efforts are needed to convince the younger generation to remain in the West Bank. He expressed concern that Hamas' Islamic orientation would silence the more moderate elements in the Palestinian community. The Consul General noted that this is a concern for the USG as well. Sabella expressed interest in speaking to future USG visitors regarding the status of Christians in the West Bank.

WALLES